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THE PUPUS TORQUATIANUS INSCRIPTION

PALAEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

IN the Galleria Lapidaria of the Vatican, near the centre of section XVII, is to be found the following inscription :¹

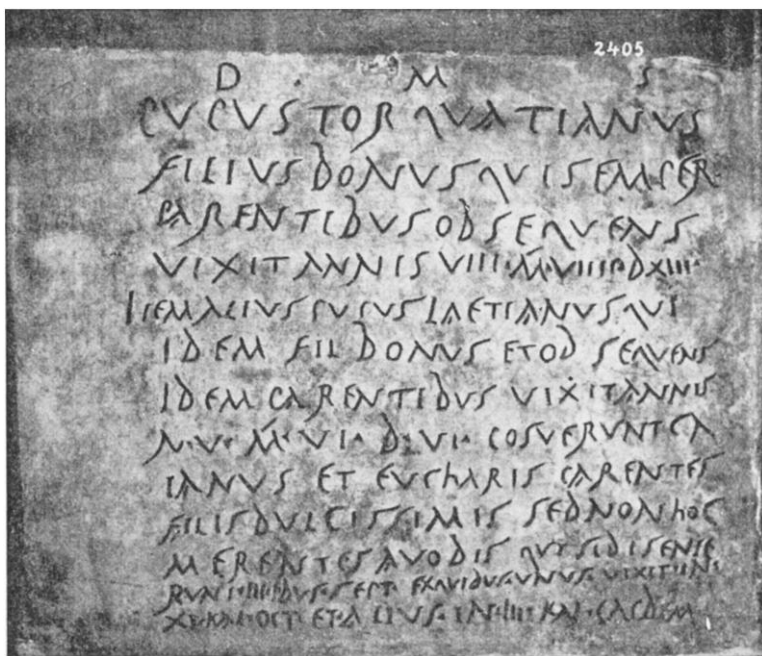


FIGURE 1.—THE PUPUS TORQUATIANUS INSCRIPTION.

We may transcribe and translate it thus :²

¹ The inscription was published, with such accuracy as was then possible, in 1795, by Gaetano Marini, *Atti Arvali*, p. 263.

² The references, which must prove unsatisfactory to any one seeking more than the barest passing comments, are: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, 27556; American Journal of Archaeology, Second Series, Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America, Vol. III (1899), Nos. 2, 3.

D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum)

Pupus Torquatianus | filius bonus qui semper | parentibus obsequens | vixit annis VIII, m(ensibus) VIII, d(iebus) XIII; | item alius pupus (Pupus¹) Laetianus qui | idem fil(ius) bonus et obsequens | idem parentibus vixit annis | n(umero) V, m(ensibus) VI, d(iebus) VI; posuerunt Ga | ianus et Eucharis parentes | filis dulcissimis sed non hoc | merentes a vobis qui sibi senserunt III idus Sept(embres), ex quibus unus vixit in | XI kal(endas) Oct(obres) et alius in III kal(endas) easdem.

‘DEDICATED TO THE SOULS OF THE DEPARTED

‘(A) Boy² Torquatianus, a good son who always lived in obedience to his parents, died at the age of eight years, nine months, and thirteen days; also another Boy² Laetianus, who, like his brother, was a good son and likewise lived in obedience to his parents, died at the age of five years, six months, and six days. This stone was put up by Gaianus and Eucharis, the parents to their dearly beloved sons, but not deserving this³ of you, who fell sick⁴ on the eleventh of September, one of whom lived until the twenty-first of September, and the other until the twenty-ninth of the same month.’

Orelli-Henzen, *Inscriptiones Latinae*, 2719; Hübner, *Exempla Scripturae Epigraphicae Latinae*, 1169, three lines given reduced to one-fourth the original size; Cagnat, *Cours d'Épigraphie latine*, p. 47; Wilmann's, 2698, transcription in capitals without notes.

¹ The difficulty as to whether we should transcribe *pupus* or *Pupus* is not a small one. There are two clearly established uses of the word, — one as a praenomen, the other as a substantive, “a child.” Vide Cagnat, 45–47; Hübner, *Handbuch*, 654–655; Michel, *Du droit de la cité romaine*, p. 142; Schmidt, in the *Philolog. Anzeiger*, 1887, holds that it is an everyday term applied to children, “boy” or “child,” and so came to find a place in the epitaphs of young children. It is strange that Cagnat, after saying on the subject of *Pupus*, p. 47, “Pourtant ce mot Pupus n'est point véritablement un prénom, et, ce qui le prouve nettement, c'est qu'on le trouve appliqué à de jeunes esclaves morts en bas âge; or les esclaves ne portent jamais de prénoms, etc.,” and after saying that “Ici Pupus [with a capital] est bien véritablement un nom commun, puisqu'il est précédé d'un adjectif,” then proceeds to transcribe our inscription with a capital P in *Pupus*. This, however, is probably a mere typographical error. It is worth noting that the grammatical argument from *alius Pupus* is not very strong in view of the general character of the inscription.

² The question of the translation of *Pupus* is really the same as that of the transcription, which has been taken up in the preceding note.

³ “Not deserving this of you,” *i.e.*, that you should die before your parents. This is one of the many references to the feeling on the part of the Romans that it was unnatural for the children to die before the parents.

⁴ “Qui sibi senserunt.” This has been taken, as indeed the grammar would demand, to refer to the parents, “who became conscious of the illness settling on their children,” but it must be taken, in violence to syntax, to refer to the children.

This inscription, with its *mélange* of forms, suggests at once the question of the relation of forms found in inscriptions to those found in manuscripts. In the case of the capital hand the closeness of this relation has always been emphasized ; but in the case of other scripts both epigraphists and palaeographers have been slow to express definite conclusions. Thus, for instance, the use of the uncial in inscriptions had received no thorough investigation until recently taken up by Hübner. Thus, too, it is often forgotten that at least as early as the first century B.C. there had already appeared in literary works an intermingling with the monumental style of the so-called cursive that is so frequent in later non-monumental inscriptions. The fixing of a type of monumental script, like the fixing of a type for the best manuscript, was effected very early ; but side by side with the formal types were to be found the various scripts of individual hands. The business man did not record his receipts from sales of grain in the same handwriting that the litterateur admired for his favorite poet ; nor did the poor man, carving out with difficulty the epitaph of his son, vie in elaborate nicety with the professional worker in marble. And yet for the student of palaeography and epigraphy, as indeed for every student of ancient life, there is much of interest in the tablets of Caecilius Iucundus and the tombstone of Torquatianus and Laetianus.

This tombstone is manifestly the tribute of slave parents, and the epitaph is the work of an untrained hand. The stone is an inferior quality of marble, and small ; it is 0.43 m. wide and 0.40 m. high. It was apparently not lined off, if we may judge from the irregularity of existing lines, nor does it show in any place the work of a regular stone-cutter. It was not even one of the stones that were kept for sale with the letters D.M. or D.M.S. already inscribed. The father of the children whose grave it marked had simply taken a cheap stone such as slaves could afford, and had inscribed, it is almost safe to say, with his own hand his children's epitaph in such letters as he could muster.

In this inscription we have to deal with an example of what is included under the rather elastic name of *scriptura vulgaris*. From this we may make no more definite inference than that it belongs to a large class of less formal and more careless inscriptions that existed beside the more elaborate monuments. Naturally we find, under this head, every stage of negligence and perversion, and it is a little satisfaction to know that the degree of badness does afford some indication of date. There can be no doubt that Hübner's ingenuity and painstaking study have enabled him to trace pretty accurately the chronological course of this sort of writing. On the other hand, I am compelled to emphasize the difficulty and danger that in many cases must attend the effort to put a particular inscription in its chronological place. It would be much less difficult if we could separate the writing of inscriptions from the handwriting of the day; and in many cases this separation is treated as made. There must be, and have been, very many cases in which a man wrote on stone much as he wrote on anything else, with only such differences as were implied by the difference of material. With this application of individual handwriting to inscriptions we have the introduction of a difficult element to which due consideration is seldom given. The present case I conceive to be very much in point. For Gaius began to carve with a determined effort to be formal, as is shown by his initial *d*, and in some measure by the following *m* and *s*; but here he already gives way and lapses into forms more familiar to him or less difficult to carve.

This brings us to a consideration of the individual letters.¹

Of the sixteen *a*'s in the inscription twelve show the type *λ*, and four the type *λ*. The number of cases of the latter is large enough to show that the form is not due to mere careless omission of the middle stroke in this particular inscription, but to the existence of such a type. And indeed we have many

¹ For individual letters see: Hübner, *Exempla*, LIII-LXVII; Wattenbach, *Anleitung zur lateinischen Palaeographie*, 43-66; Zangemeister, *Tables*, in *C.I.L.* IV, at end.

examples of similar forms. Some of these are to be seen in more or less formal documents even of the early empire, although their occurrence may sometimes be due to carelessness of the stone-cutter. They occur frequently in the papyri of Herculaneum; and unquestionably belong to the *scriptura actuaria*. In the wax tablets of Pompeii we have the form λ — perhaps the curving representative of λ , or possibly of λ — which is far advanced towards the half uncial form λ . The type λ (λ λ) is the most common in the *scriptura vulgaris*, and needs no comment. It is of course merely the older form Λ , with the middle stroke separated from the right stroke and placed between the two legs. There is no doubt that the two forms from which ours are descended were to be found even in republican times beside the regular monumental type A.

The *b*'s, with the exception of those in *obsequens* of line 6 and *sibi* of line 11, are fairly uniform. The upper stroke to the left, which is more pronounced in some cases than others, for instance in the careful *b* of line 2, I take to be a trace of the vanishing upper curve of the capital letter. The *b*'s of *obsequens* in the sixth line and *sibi* in the eleventh look very much as if they were made by a single free-hand stroke, but, if I mistake not, the lower left-hand part is still made with a second stroke. Between all such forms and the minuscules of later handwriting there is no great gulf, for the only change would consist in making the letter with a single movement on more tractable material, and in finishing it in such a way as to afford an easy transition to the following letter of the line. The most interesting parallels to our *b*'s are to be found in the painted inscriptions on the walls of Pompeii.

The *c*'s are of interest only as showing in a striking manner the influence of material on form. It is safe to say that the rounded *c* was aimed at, and that the stone proved an effective obstacle to an unskilled hand. With *c* we may group *o*, *t*, and *x* as naturally offering fewer possibilities of serious divergence than most of the letters.

The *d* of the dedication and the *d* in *Idus* of line 12

stand out prominently from their fellows. The former is a carefully though faultily formed capital, and represents the most strenuous efforts on the part of the graver; the latter represents merely the possibilities of cursive crowding and carelessness on marble. The presence of the capital form with the others suggests the line of growth of the latter. From the capital *d*, as the result of a tendency to continue the curve of the concluding stroke beyond its junction with the perpendicular line, grew the *Đ* of the early *scriptura actuariaria*; from this to the *d*'s before us is an easy step. Another feature of interest is the easy passage from such forms as these to the uncial *ð*. It involves only the rounding of the straight line, and the making of the whole with a single stroke. The Pompeian *graffiti* are exceedingly rich in variations of the letter *d*.

The first *e* of *semper* in line 2, the *e* of *parentibus* in line 3, and that of *et* in line 6, show forms which, though growing from a type employed first in painted inscriptions, are yet rather near to the rectilinearity which belongs so naturally to incisions in a hard substance. The careless omission of the lowest horizontal stroke leaves us a form of *e* that can easily be confused with the *f* of many inscriptions; and with these cases before us we shall not be at all surprised at such mistakes as *eidicis* for *fidelis*, which have attracted some attention.¹ The remaining forms show *ε* with numerous and erratic variations due to stone and hand. Cagnat² points out that this form comes from the Greek, and is most frequently used in inscriptions of the third century A.D. What concerns us here, however, is that the maker of our inscription must have transferred his *e lunata* from some less untractable material. It is found in the older painted inscriptions of Pompeii and in the Herculean papyri; and is already practically identical with the uncial *e*.

¹ Cf. 'L'Exposition de la Cour Coulaincourt,' *Revue Archéologique*, 1881, p. 239.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

After what has been said of *e*, *f* may be treated very briefly. At the first glance it strikes the eye through its curving free-hand stroke, which at once suggests pencil or brush. Indeed, such forms as these make one incline very strongly to the view that the stone was first marked out in painted letters. This is opposed, however, by some of the harder rectilinear forms, by the general carelessness, and also by the crookedness of the lines; it seems hardly probable that the stone-cutter should have taken so much trouble and still have failed utterly in his allotment of space. I have yet to find in any inscription another *f* as flowing¹ as the first letter of our second line, and have been able to find its like only in manuscripts.

Our single *g* presents no peculiarity except the strong twist from the perpendicular. It belongs to the manuscript capital and uncial type



which is seen with only incidental changes in the cursive and vulgar. The monumental type *G* persists until late in the Empire on more formal inscriptions, but even here it begins to be replaced as early as the second century.

In the *h* of *hoc*, line 10, the palaeographer might very pardonably take delight. It is a beautiful little letter in very homely surroundings, but not marred, as is the *h* of *Eucharis*, by crowding. As early as the papyri of Herculaneum the form *h* presents itself, and this gradually passes into inscriptions. But there is nowhere a more beautiful example of an *h* of this kind than the one before us, which looks as if it might have been transferred from the careful handiwork of an able scribe. With this form we have practically reached the uncial, and are confronted again with the whole problem of the use of uncials in inscriptions. Space unfortunately forbids a

¹ Hübner's facsimile (1169) fails to bring out this feature.

discussion of this interesting question; I shall have to limit myself to a reference to an excellent monograph by M. Émile Chatelain,¹ and the remarks of Hübner.²

The letter *i* might have been classed with those which present few noteworthy variations, but we have here something of special interest. The initial *i*'s of lines 5, 6, and 7 are longer than usual. Of these the most striking is the first, which is almost certainly an example of the long letter at the beginning of a line or word.³ The case of the other two is less clear, but I fancy the same explanation is to be given. The references in the note will give a complete discussion of the general question involved.

The *k*'s of line 13 recall the forms of *k* in the Pompeian *graffiti*. The change from the capital is so easy as to require no comment.

In connection with the *l*'s we need note only the shortness of the horizontal stroke and the tendency to turn it downwards.

The *m* of the dedication shows no such striking variation from its fellows as was true of the *d*. The form throughout is so close to the rustic capitals as to mark the most careful cursive. The change from the capital to the best cursive was very simple. In the genuine older form all four strokes came down to the base line and made angles with it; then the second and third strokes were shortened, but as a sort of compensation the first stroke came to be often extended below the base line, as is seen in the case of our inscription. From this to the extreme cursive the course is not as long as it might seem, and it ran perhaps through forms like these, — *M M* *M'* *|''*, which may all be found in the *graffiti* of Pompeii. The apex over the *m* in lines 4 and 8 is worth noting as occurring where it can only be intended to indicate an abbreviation.⁴ We should expect that the initial letter of *manibus* would have

¹ *L'inscription du Moissonneur*. Paris, 1889.

² *Exempla*, XXVIII.

³ Cf. Christiansen, *De apicibus et i longis*, and Hübner, *Exempla*, LIX.

⁴ Cf. Christiansen, *De apicibus et i longis*, p. 18.

the same mark of abbreviation ; but I do not fancy that any significance attaches to this except as to the lack of consistency on the part of the man who engraved the inscription. There is as yet no evidence to show that the abbreviation for *mensibus* had the apex more commonly than the abbreviation for *manibus*.

Here, as elsewhere, *n* is among the most conservative of letters. It runs to a few cursive extremes ; but preserves its type very late. Even after *m* has been rounded off into an uncial form, *n* still holds out in sturdy angularity on both stone and paper. The tendency to curvature in the last stroke of the *n*'s from the seventh line on is entirely exceptional.

The *p*'s are perhaps the most puzzling letters on the stone. After the first one they seem to be twirled out, so to speak, with a single stroke in a manner quite unnatural on marble. One could easily understand their appearance from under a brush or even a pen, but I take it their appearance from beneath a chisel can only be explained in one way, and that is by supposing that the carver merely tried to make on the stone such letters as he was accustomed to write. Hübner¹ quotes these *p*'s to show that the *sculptura vulgaris quamvis negligens* preserved the open form of the *p*.

The peculiar *q*'s only suggest again that the distance between the strange letters of our inscription and the elaborate capital forms is not as great as it seems. When one finds even two intermediate forms, for example Δ, and the regular cursive ɳ, the distance is wonderfully shortened. The common cursive form does not often appear in inscriptions, and the present variation I have been able to match only in the *graffiti* of Pompeii.

The *r*'s, fantastic as they appear, have yet a position as medials between the capitals and the immense number of non-monumental forms such as,



¹ *Exempla*, LXIV.

etc. I forbear tracing in detail the changes which will probably suggest themselves. Here, again, the form can be explained only by the transference to stone of letters belonging to other material.

The *s* of the dedication is not as bad as the others, but it shows in a marked manner the neglect of monumental form on which I have commented. After such an *s* in the dedicatory line, one can hardly be surprised at the collection in line 12. If the first *s* were a good capital, this inscription would itself furnish an almost complete series to the extreme cursive.

The *u* is a little surprising in that it shows no sign of curvature. The full uncial form is extant in many of the carelessly written inscriptions of the second and third centuries of our era. Just how the engraver of our inscription came to retain an angular form I am not willing to surmise. If it has any significance for chronology, it would argue for an earlier date than Hübner assigns to this inscription.

This recalls the duty of attempting to date the inscription, at least approximately. I do not feel in a position to do so. Hübner says that it seems to belong to the third century, but I do not think he would insist on what he proffers as probable. As was said at the beginning, I think one element of difficulty in dating a vulgar inscription has not always received due weight, and I have no wish to run counter to my own view. I would say, however, with extreme diffidence, that to me there seems no serious objection to placing the inscription at about the middle of the second century after Christ. This earlier date would seem to be supported by the fact that cursive letters would appear in the work of a non-professional stone-cutter long before they would be found in that of a professional workman. Consequently a non-professional inscription showing cursive characteristics would, other things being equal, belong to an earlier period than a professional inscription with the same characteristics.

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